THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI KASHIRAM RANA): (a) and (b) Based on the information furnished by the State Government concerned, the turnover of the Handloom Corporations of the States of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh has declined from the year 1994-95 to 1997-98 by about 64% and 43% respectively while the turnover of the Handloom Corporation of Gujarat has increased from the year 1994-95 to 1997-98 by about 31%. The performance of the State Handloom Corporations is monitored by the State Governments concerned. However, the possible reasons for decline in turnover may include inter-alia, inadequate measures taken by the State Corporations towards diversification of the products, development of value added product range.

(c) and (d) A Committee constituted in the year 1991, to review the Janata Cloth Scheme, observed that it has contributed to the de-skilling of the weavers by producing cloth of low unit value and therefore, recommended phasing out of the scheme. The Government after examining the recommendations of this Committee, introduced Package-II under Janata Cloth Scheme in the year 1993-94 with the objective of enabling handloom weavers to graduate to production of higher value textile goods and to provide alternate employment to handloom weavers displaced on account of phasing out of Janata Cloth Scheme and also decided to phase out the scheme by 1996-97. The Government, however, extended the scheme for the year 1997-98 so as to facilitate the transition.

(e) To deal with the issues of the Handloom Sector, periodic reviews are undertaken from time to time by the Government of India.

Upgradation of Garment Technology

*214. SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any representation from the representatives of garment and textile industry for Rs. 2000 crores to upgrade its technology and improve competitiveness in the global market;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) Government's action thereon;

(d) whether any Committee has been set up to look into the improvement of the textile industry; and

(e) is so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI KASHIRAM RANA): (a) to (c) The garment export industry has represented for the creation of a fund to enable the industry to avail of soft loans for modernisation.

A proposal is under formulation to facilitate modernisation, through technological upgradation, of the textile industry. The intended objective is to improve production and productivity of the Indian textile industry to make it more competitive. Details of a Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme for the textiles sector are being worked out.

(d) and (e) It has been decided to set up an expert group under the Chairmanship of Shri S.R. Sathyam for the purpose of enabling the formulation of a new textile policy. The composition and the terms of reference are under finalisation.

Sick NTC Mills

*215. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have offered sick National Textiles Corporation (NTC) mills to the State Government;

(b) if so, the details of the proposal made to the State Governments and the reaction/response of the State Governments thereto, particularly that of Maharashtra;

(c) what is the financial and operational implication of the proposal; and

(d) what is Government's policy in regard to the sick textile mills?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI KASHIRAM RANA): (a) to (d) An offer to take over sick textile mills at a nominal cost or even free of cost was made to the respective State Governments provided the State Governments were willing to accept the responsibility of running the viable mills and protecting the interest of the workers. Offer was also made that the Central Govt. would write-off/waive the loans given by the Govt. of India/NTC (HC) to these mills and interest thereon as well as the amount of VRS paid to the workers who had accepted voluntary retirement. In addition, the Govt. of India would be willing to discharge the liabilities towards arrears of statutory dues of the workers. The Governments of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka have declined the offer. No concrete response has been received from the other State Governments to whom the offer was made.

Since a positive response has not been received from any of the State Governments to whom the offer was made the details of financial and operational implication have not been worked out.

It has been laid down in the Textile policy notified in 1985 that the measures needed for the revival of a sick unit have to be based on a detailed and objective study of the causes that led to the sickness and identification of the steps necessary to revive the unit. A distinction shall have to be made between units which are potentially viable and units which are not. As per Govt. policy take over by Govt. or nationalisation of such sick units does not provide solution to the problems of sickness and the Govt. would not as a rule intervene in such cases. However, where a unit has no expectation of becoming viable in a reasonable period of time, there may be no alternative but to allow the unit to close provided the interest of the workers are protected.

Moreover, according to the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1985 the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction is entrusted with the responsibility of rehabilitating the sick textile mills.

Expert Committee on Ordnance Factories

*216. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering formation of Expert Committee in view of drastic changes made in composition of chemicals used in ordnance factories;

(b) whether there are any regular programmes conducted on safety and training imparted to the ordnance factory employees; and

(c) whether new technology and preventive care is manualised, if not, the reasons therefor; and if so, the inspecting authority to implement the recommendations?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) Safety measures in ordnance factories conform to prescriptions of the Centre for Environmental and Explosive Safety (CEES) and Controllerate of Quality Assurance (Military Explosives), and are relevant to the chemicals in current use. No Expert Committee is proposed to be constituted, nor have drastic changes come about in the chemicals used.

Manuals incorporating General Safety Directives (GSDs) and Standing Instructions (SIs) have been compiled and issued. These relate to the manufacturing process, storage, transportation and handling of explosives.